

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for June 5, 2002

Agenda Items

- MLK Corridor Design Development (60%) Briefing
 - Edmunds Station
 - Othello Station
 - Henderson Station

Commissioners Present

Carolyn Law
Jay Lazerwitz
Jack Mackie
Don Royse
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign
Kathy A Dockins, CityDesign

LRRP Business

Cheryl and Kathy reported that meeting notes had been approved and were available for all 2002 meetings except for March 20, 2002. They expressed thanks to all who took the time to review meeting minutes. Cheryl noted there is no compelling agenda item for the LRRP meeting scheduled for June 19th, therefore at the end of this meeting the Panel should decide whether or not to meet on that date. There will be no meetings in July. The following meeting date is August 7, where we'll review 60% design for McClellan Station. The schedule will get very busy this autumn, with the Panel reviewing MLK 90% design, the SEIS for North Link, and Beacon Hill 60% design. Cheryl also reiterated that we have not yet chosen a Chair, and that at some point we need to re-visit the topic of who would like to remain on the Panel and who would not. The end of the summer would be a good "break" point, so Panelists who would like to move on should keep that in mind. No questions or comments from the Panel.

Debora said that unless the Panel had any questions for her in particular or Sound Transit in general, she had nothing new to report, except for some upcoming public meetings: this Saturday at the Apostolic Church; next Thursday at the Rainier Beach Community Center, and the 15th and 20th of June at the Rainier Valley Cultural Center.

MLK Corridor Design Development Briefing (Individual Stations)

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Steve Arai, Arai Jackson
Owen Lang, Sasaki Associates
Carol Valenti, Sound Transit

Today Sound Transit is presenting revised 60% design work for the individual at-grade stations within the MLK Corridor, as well as art updates for the Corridor. The Panel has seen some of this before, but because the design work was on hold for a while and some refinements were made, ST wanted the Panel to see it again. 90% work for 730 should be complete by September 1, and 90% work for 740 should be complete by October 1.

Steve Arai began with a conceptual overview of the stations in the Rainier Valley. McClellan through Henderson will be a family of stations, reflecting the neighborhoods along Corridor as they change from industrial to residential (traveling north). The urban design of the stations has been done in a contextual way to provide a link as well as memory between the stations. After Owen and Carol discuss the plazas and art, respectively, Steve will go over each at-grade station in the Corridor, beginning with Edmunds.

Owen Lang talked about the function of the station plazas, which are companion pieces at either end of each station. The technical and signal buildings will be housed there, and the largest trees in the landscaping scheme will be located there as well since that is where the most room is and fewer constraints for planting. Different approaches will be used to screen the technical/signal buildings: art, walls, landscaping, but each will communicate with the others in a common language. The plazas will incorporate a family of furnishings, including bike storage and parking, and Metro shelters. Per the Panel's request, Sasaki has looked at other possible wall treatments to complement the design of each station.

Carol Valenti updated Panel members on the idea of "art nodes", making the stations actual destinations for people, as opposed to simply stopping points along the way. She also spoke of the concept of a cultural conversation taking place between the stations, with diversity as well as cohesiveness.

Steve Arai began his presentation of **Edmunds Station** by reminding the Panel that it is a double-end loaded side platform. Canopy coverage has been increased to accommodate the oft-rainy Seattle weather. A tactile braid which traverses the station has been added (at each station). The white stripes down the platform (in the drawings) are the paving pattern, which is currently beyond City requirements, but it will vary. By the 90% design stage, the final colors will be worked out. The canopy at Edmunds will reflect the residential character of the area in the Craftsman style, with the end bays as actual trellises with plants. The columns are similar to previous renderings; Arai Jackson is currently looking at ways to build up the structure more. The drawings are more reflective of the actual color, the beams and posts have been built up, the standard light has been incorporated into the structure, and the purlins are large enough to accommodate the wiring. The glazing itself will be virtually identical from station to station (using the Sound Transit standard), but its expression will vary. The Kim fixtures discussed at the last meeting will be used overhead, augmented by fluorescents above the back of the platform. The windscreens will consist of a pre-cast wall in the back with standard glazing above, which should be easy to replace and clean. The railings will be simple, and will be similar at each station.

Each of Edmunds Station's plazas (north end and south end) will have different, but complementary artwork. Victoria Fuller's shovel will be at the south plaza (a model was circulated to Panel members). Owen adds that the "art wall" is still being developed, and could have a paratransit drop-off connecting it to the Lion Pride art pieces. Lighting and wayfinding will be standard at the plazas, some trees will be retained and others will be planted, and there is a definite effort to make the walls as uninviting as possible to skateboarders. The north plaza will feature Gail McCall's work shown at the last meeting (baskets and magnifying glass; models passed around to all) as well as Norie Sato's braid. The plaza seating areas will feature standard benches.

All along the platform will be grasses and bamboo and evergreen shrubs including rhododendrons, barberry, and azaleas. Plant heights may go as high as 5 to 6 feet tall.

Column bases will be brick with a pre-cast concrete top. The exact brick color is still being discussed, along with the possibility of using river rock instead of the brick, since some of the artwork features a river rock base. Debora asked the Panel to think about whether they prefer brick, river rock, or both?

The main goals of the Edmunds Street pedestrian corridor are safety and accessibility, so improvements like curb cuts and sidewalk replacements will take most of the funds allocated for Edmunds Street improvements.

Pedestrian-scale lighting fixtures will be added, with the possibility of trees being added as well. Something will be needed to mitigate the block-long chain-link fence alongside Orca School.

Discussion

- What about curb bulbs to increase pedestrian safety? *This is not too busy of an area, and we are keeping the traffic circle. We think the money is best invested in other amenities, and we're hoping to bring a better sense of scale to the corridor.*
- Can the City provide the trees? *We are considering asking the City to provide trees for Henderson, but we actually have money for "fill-in" trees at Edmunds.*
- What about funding for the fence? *The fence already exists; the issue is funding for a design treatment. And yes, we have funding for that.*
- If the City DOES pay for the trees, will that leave more money for other amenities and safety features? *Yes.*
- Will there be pedestrian lighting the full way down the corridor (the whole block)? *Yes, all the way to Rainier Avenue.*
- Will there be irrigation for landscaping? *Within the station and plazas, there will be ongoing irrigation; outside of station areas, there will be irrigation for three years to establish the plantings.*
- What is the material below the glass on the platform? *Pre-cast concrete, although we are considering a possible base of brick masonry for a more contiguous design.*
- Does the paving we've seen today reflect what it will look like system-wide? *Yes; same with the braid, although the color behind the braid may vary—we haven't decided that yet.*
- I'm concerned about the brick—it seems a little "lonely" and unconnected from other station materials if used only at the column bases with river rock everywhere else. Something needs to give. A little across the art bases would make it less isolated. Where exactly will the river rock be? *Under the magnifying glass and the baskets. Will real rocks be used? That's the plan.*

At this point, Sound Transit staff elaborated about materials. When we were here last, Gail expressed her preference for river rock under her artwork. We also felt it would be useful as a preventive measure to keep people from crossing the tracks where they're not supposed to. The crossings would be a stamp, not real rock. We don't want to introduce another material at this point. The two-by-two paving pattern will be the same at all the plazas. The plaza wall will be CMU (concrete masonry unit) block; it can be rougher, with a darker texture. The walls will have some openings; they won't be totally opaque. We're really trying to stay away from having the walls look like another building, and may also use river rock or brick for the walls where possible.

- Don't do a veneer or formed/stamped river rock—it never looks quite right.
- NO CMU!! Especially in combination with all the other materials—it feels like too much going on.
- I second that!
- Cheryl requested clarification on the river rock – will it be stamped or real? *Real on the art bases; stamped on the trackway header.*
- I definitely prefer red brick.
- I like the idea of tying the paving a column together, otherwise I'm not sure about combining all these materials—it looks "spotty." *The CMU wall in Edmunds plaza is 800 feet away and across the street from the screening wall at the other end, so compatibility of materials may not be an issue.*
- I am pleased with the changes to the canopy. It seems like a good transition to a controlled brick base makes more sense than transitioning to a river rock base, although if the art baskets are on a river rock base, that's okay. The magnifying glass base is so big that river rock doesn't feel appropriate there.
- I agree; the river rock doesn't work at that scale. *We would definitely be facing a budget challenge if we used real river rock for the pedestal base.*

- The canopy is definitely more sophisticated; the design is better. Frankly, I think the use of river rock is silly, except for the artwork bases. If brick is used for the column bases only, it won't work. It needs to be tied in.
- The layering is interesting. I'm glad to see the large scale of artwork too. Although I still wonder about the long walk to the platform, there should be some interesting sounds with wind blowing through the bamboo on the walk from the intersection.
- I'm glad the central barrier is simpler now, but there are still some elements that feel arbitrary. The station canopy is definitely more sophisticated, but I'm wondering about the angle at the beam and lighting. *That's something we're already looking at.*
- Well, the model is definitely more elegant than the drawing—I hope you are using the model design
- For the screening wall, I think you should think about pulling from the same family of design elements (not CMU block).
- I'd love to see the gore area landscaped. I just have to say that again! *We've tried. There's no way.*

The presentation continued for the **Othello Station**, which features a "dancing wall," which skips across the street at varying heights (three to six feet). It fits in with the existing edge, and reflects the attempt to bring the elements across the station. At this point, Carol Valenta intercepted Owen Lang with the latest news that they hope to incorporate "dancer art" instead of using the wall Owen just described. These are large cut metal silhouettes of dancers which would be placed where the current plans show the wall. The plaza at the other end features Roger Shimomura's free-standing totem. Carol says she and ST recognize that Roger's piece poses a lot of questions and will generate a lot of conversation; she would like to hear the Panel's views.

Othello Station is shorter than Edmunds, and also double-end loaded. A defining feature is integrating station architecture with Brian Goldbloom's carved granite artwork. Previous plans included granite markers on one end only; they have since expanded to each end and are illuminated. The challenge will be to integrate more granite in concert with the Asian theme of the station, potentially setting stone within the trackway, at each column, and at the entrance canopy with stone seats. Currently, the columns have no bases, so there is a concern that the "empty" spots where the bases would have been will become a repository for trash. ST may add granite bases to the columns to avoid that outcome.

A metal downspout will channel into the basin, and there is a possibility of a downspout chain. The canopy coverage has been increased from five bays to eight. The paving pattern is similar to that of Edmunds Station; the canopy is similar to what was in the previous set of 60% drawings. ST is trying to give the canopy a better sit on its frame. The tip of the primary beam will have a significant accent color, potentially red.

The platform lighting is similar to Edmunds with the Kim lights above and the fluorescent lights at the back of the platform. The windscreen has a shoji-screen look, with the system-wide standard glazing. The handrails are similar and also thematic. The landscaping will feature Blue Mountain Laurel, nandina, and other plants.

- The symbolism of the Shimomura totem seems heavy. It's more polemic than the other pieces of art. However, after hearing its explanation, I am more convinced. *At the base of the plinth, there will be metal haikus with individual interpretations of the piece by different poets.*
- I think it's good to help translate that for the community.
- I like Roger's work, but how self-explanatory is it? Does it "translate" to this community? The story is deep, but is it well communicated by the train? People won't sit and read the explanations or interpretations.
- It is important that the community accept and embrace the artwork.

- Maybe you could bring the haiku to the platform? *We've considered it as screening, which is why it's located where it is.*

Cheryl asked the Panel to think about ST's possible use of the dark grey paint instead of the dark blue – system-wide or just at Othello, and also asked for questions and comments.

- Good job!
- I'm confused about the grey/blue option. How about just blue? We definitely don't want both together.
- The canopy has more grace and sophistication than before. The arm that holds the light is nice; is it metal? Yes.
- Do we need an accent color (for the tip of the primary beam)? Is red too much? Should it be a softer color? *Although the station has an Asian theme, the neighborhood is in transition, with an increasing North African community. We're finding that the design choices are compatible with both cultures.*
- I really like the dancing figures.
- Will the granite pieces be cut or bulky? *They'll be cut to a precise profile.*
- What will be the material on the haiku wall? *A trellis.*
- I like the granite. What about rainwater? *Into the planter area and then the drain.* I'm a little concerned about the design and function of the drain grate.
- I'm disappointed with how dark the paint color is. I'm afraid you'll lose the articulation on the back end of the beam (shows where). However, I'm pleased that the outside wall is broken up so there is some articulation for the folks outside the station. Consider this at other stations as well.
- The granite breaks through and tells the story of the canted piece. I don't know how ST will choose a downspout – maybe they could use a literal chain, like rural mailbox supports (general laughter).
- The chain can look like a tension element; let intermediate downspouts also be in chain.
- I like Roger's piece. It's pointed, and it prods and pokes. It's provocative in the best sense of the word.
- I had mixed feelings at first but it's a strong polemic.
- People will make up their own stories about it over time.

Henderson Station is a center-loaded platform, and the plaza is located beneath the City Light power line easement, with a connection to the bike trail, trees reinforcing the corridor landscaping theme, a comfort station, and a Metro shelter. There will be covered bike parking (as well as other bike parking). The plaza's totem is Buster's bowl sculpture. Buster is considering continuing with bowls/dishes imbedded in the ground as if they fell from the total structure, and they will complement the seating elements (totem made of aluminum; seating of polyresin). We've carefully designed the plaza to keep pedestrians and cyclists from conflicting. There is no need for a special drainage system, as it will be handled topographically. Buster may put "weep holes" in the bowl sculpture pieces for extra drainage. Ultimately, he'd like to include a plate which would act as a roof and perhaps activate the area by allowing a place for a small business (food/beverage vendor?). It's also a good area for paratransit. It's not intended to be the focal point of the station, but a business could be located there. The corner definitely needs to be activated. The bike connection from the trail will be helpful.

Henderson is Seattle's first or last station, depending on where you start. The original bus staging/layover area has been simplified, but significant elements remain. Layover is now occurring on-street instead of off-street. There isn't a lot of commercial activity here now—or envisioned for the immediate future—so the station design simply focuses on the transportation activity itself; that and the theme of "wind" that blows through here—images such as wings, birds, things floating in a channel or air. Tall vertical elements serve as entrance/exit features.

Planting will be magnolia, nandina, teaberry. Refinements which have been made are the Kim lighting and backlighting to match the other stations. The tactile braid is more complex at this station, bifurcating the platform.

With the systems structures building to the south, there's currently an attempt to make it more neutral by adding an arch, but there's nothing really neutral about the building (still working on that). Pre-cast elements will be used around the station to match the other stations. We're looking at the substantial integration of artwork. A prow-like feature may be integrated into the building. Ticket vending has changed; the orientation was changed to ensure that queues of ticket-buyers wouldn't block the platform (as it is center-loaded).

The canopy features cable supports which are structurally functional. Again, the glazing is identical to the other stations but its expression is different. The narrow nature of the platform plus wind direction affected the design of the windscreen, which is U-shaped. The primary artwork is Darlene Nguyen-Ely's "Dragonfly" piece, hung by cables off of the bundled columns.

Discussion

- Where does the bike trail continue? *This is a spur. The trail follows the power line right-of-way to Chief Sealth.*
- How will the ticket booths work? *The canopy stretches over the area; there are columns on both sides with ticket kiosks (shown), so instead of a line blocking the platform there are two lines which will go down each side.*
- What are those tall grey poles? *OCS.*
- Are we using a four-pole system? *No. Will it wrap as a center piece? Maybe – we'll take a look. The notion to pull the (systems) building in is good. You could take the canopy design, turn it upside down, and use that for the roof.*
- Size of planters on platform? *It's hard to keep the plants alive and keep garbage out of the planters. Maybe if we bring them up a little so they come up out of the ground.*
- The additional leaning rail is protected by the other windscreens? *Yes.*
- Perhaps the "measurements" artwork could substitute for the planters? Are you set in the artwork direction for the systems building? *No. It doesn't make for a graceful image. It's also presented as a view when leaving only; its current features are "one-way" and seen only directionally. We need to soften the box. You definitely need to make use of the building; the station has great character, so you've got to incorporate that building.*
- Overall, I thought the canopy was elegant before, and it still is. It's a good entry to the Rainier Valley stations, and needs to have an elegant flight motif.
- Are the OCS pole caps systemic or just in the Seattle stations? *Just Rainier Valley.*
- I'd like to congratulate Sound Transit. They've done a great job with everything, including the use of the Kim light, and I have every confidence they'll be able to pull it off.
- The design has become more graceful; it's a much happier "family." That was not the case before. *In previous iterations, each station's team worked separately, almost in competition. This time all the teams worked together as a single piece.*
- It really works! This feels like a real contribution to the streetscape.

Action

The Panel thanked Sound Transit and consultants for the presentation and expressed appreciation for the resolution of design issues previously mentioned by the Panel. Panel members noted they were pleased to see how the design of each of the three stations has matured with its own individuality, while also sharing design elements with one another and knitting together as part of the entire Corridor design. The Panel then voted unanimously to recommend approval of MLK's 60% design as revised. The Panel showed particular support for:

- *the refinement of station canopy designs at Edmunds and Othello, leading to a more sophisticated design overall;*
- *addressing rainwater creatively in the canopy designs and several of the artworks;*
- *the use of granite to "tell the story" of other design elements at Othello Station;*
- *the provocative nature of Roger Shimamura's piece at Othello Station;*
- *the articulation of the outside retaining wall at Othello Station;*
- *the Henderson Station's canopy as a good entry to all Rainier Valley stations; and*
- *the transformation of discrete, competing stations into a much happier "family" of stations which work well individually and collectively.*

The Panel further requested additional work on the following items prior to 90% review:

- *Edmunds Station:*
 - *Discussion with the City about funding trees along Edmunds Street so ST funds can be used for more pedestrian amenities and safety features;*
 - *General reconsideration of the variety of materials in use at this station—brick, river rock, CMU, etc.—in favor of a simpler, more cohesive palette (with particular concern over the use of CMU for the plaza screen walls and the use of river rock (real or stamped) for the base of artworks); and*
 - *Further detailing of the angle of the station shelter canopy, preferring the articulation shown in the model versus that in the drawings presented.*
- *Othello Station:*
 - *Reconsideration of the paint color to something much lighter, so articulation of beams in the shelter are not lost;*
 - *Choice of one color (preferably blue) for the metal beams of the station shelter; and*
 - *Reconsideration of the accent color at the tip of the beams (forgoing accent color altogether).*
- *Henderson Station:*
 - *resolution of the design of the systems building to the south—tying it in with the rest of the station; and*
 - *elimination of the planters on the platform to avoid the problems of maintaining the plants, possibly substituting the "Measurements" artwork for the planters.*

Lastly, Jack Mackie requested drawings of other portions of Link, including Boeing Access and other stations in order to get sense of the system as a whole; stressing that would not be for LRRP review, but to provide a context for the Seattle segment. 8.5" by 11" copies are fine. Debora said that she has S 150th station at 30% design and would e-mail 8 ½" x 11" size copies to the Panel.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.